

# NEWS RELEASE



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**For Immediate Release**  
**July 18, 2005**

## **LOCAL TOBACCO STORE OWNER SENTENCED IN COUNTERFEIT ZIG-ZAG TRADEMARK SCHEME**

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . WAJDI ABDULAZIZ BEYDOUN, age 39, a Lebanese national currently residing in the Dearborn Heights, Michigan area, was sentenced early Friday evening by United States District Judge S. Maurice Hicks to spend 46 months in prison for conspiracy and trafficking in counterfeit goods, United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced. BEYDOUN was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$566,267 to North Atlantic Trading Company, the Zig-Zag distributor. Following the sentencing hearing, BEYDOUN was immediately remanded to the custody of the U.S. Marshal Service.

BEYDOUN entered a plea of guilty in February to an indictment charging him with one count of conspiracy and one count of trafficking in counterfeit goods. BEYDOUN acted as the owner of five Tobacco World stores located in Shreveport, Bossier City, Bethany, and Logansport, Louisiana. From January 1999 until August 25, 2004, BEYDOUN was involved in a scheme to illegally import cigarette rolling papers from an overseas source and then repackage them for retail sale in smaller quantities in booklet covers bearing a counterfeit "Zig-Zag" trademark.

To complete the scheme, BEYDOUN contacted a printing company in Tucson, Arizona to print one million booklet covers bearing a counterfeit "Zig-Zag" trademark, and another Arizona company to cut the sheets of counterfeit booklet covers after they had been printed. BEYDOUN paid over \$16,000 to the company to print the counterfeit covers. These counterfeit booklet covers were then smuggled into Mexico where BEYDOUN utilized

Mexican prison laborers to remove the legitimate booklet covers from the cigarette rolling papers and have them re-wrapped with the counterfeit Zig-Zag booklet covers for distribution within the United States, with each package containing a smaller quantity of rolling papers than the original. A legitimate package of Zig-Zag rolling papers contains 100 leaves of paper; the package containing the counterfeit trademark contained only 32 leaves of paper. BEYDOUN then transported the counterfeit Zig-Zag rolling papers from Mexico to Arizona. The counterfeit goods were sent to a store in Dearborn, Michigan, as well as to the Tobacco World stores in Louisiana, and sold for \$1.25 each.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. United States Sentencing Guidelines established by the United States Congress and the United States Sentencing Commission are only used as guidelines by the judge in determining the appropriate sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

This case was jointly investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert W. Gillespie, Jr.

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